

II. The King County Benchmark Program

Monitoring the Countywide Planning Policies by Identifying Trends in Community Indicators

Background

In 1990 the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). For the first time in the State's history, all urban counties and their cities were required to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement the plans. To achieve a coordinated countywide plan across King County's jurisdictions, GMA further required that King County and its now 39 cities develop framework policies- the King County *Countywide Planning Policies*- to guide the development of the jurisdictions' plans.

In order to obtain interjurisdictional coordination, the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is responsible for defining and refining the policies in the *Countywide Planning Policies*. The original *Countywide Planning Policies* were adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council and ratified by the original 31 cities in 1994. Since then, they have been amended several times.

Purpose

The *Countywide Planning Policies* are goals for maintaining and improving the quality of life in King County. To measure our progress in attaining these goals, the GMPC identified 45 community indicators in five policy areas: economics, environment, affordable housing, land use, and transportation. As one of the first and most durable efforts at monitoring outcomes in the public sector, the King County Benchmark Program was created to measure broad quality-of-life outcomes to determine if public policy and programs are making a difference.

Public outcome monitoring is a strategy to promote accountability and adaptability: it alerts us to what we are doing well, and to where we need to do better. It is intimately connected to both the policy goals that it monitors, and to the strategic planning, programs, and services that are intended to implement those goals. Effective implementation of countywide policies also depends on strategic planning and performance monitoring at the jurisdictional and department levels. For example, monitoring how efficiently we are using urban land countywide presumes that responsible jurisdictions and departments are undertaking the appropriate actions to use urban land efficiently, and are tracking the effectiveness of their programs in achieving the countywide goal.

It is important to note that macro-level outcome measurements such as the 45 Benchmark Indicators are often affected by external factors outside the direct control of government agencies. Some, such as the economic indicators, are less responsive to local government strategies than others, such as land use indicators. But policy goals imply that something can be done. Through concerted efforts in both the public and civic sectors we can have some effect on all of these indicators. The intention is to work collaboratively to define the society we want to create and inhabit. Tracking these indicators allows policy-makers to know if we are improving the quality of our lives in King County and effecting positive change.

The following pages select several indicators from the 45 that make up the King County Benchmark Program and key findings in the five policy areas.

Economic Development. Following several years of economic slowdown, signs of growth suggest a recovery is underway in King County. King County's unemployment rate fell to 5.1% in 2004, dipping below 5% in 2005. However, employment growth has been unevenly distributed as construction, health care, administrative professions, and the hospitality industry saw growth while losses occurred in finance and insurance and manufacturing (mainly aerospace manufacturing).

Though employment has dropped, wages and income have struggled to keep up with inflation. Excluding the software industry, real wages grew by a little over 1% per year from 2000 to 2004. After extraordinary growth in the mid to late 1990's, annual wages for software publishers decreased almost 20% per year since 1999 when they peaked at nearly \$190,000 (average employee wage in real dollars). The high wages in 1999 were bolstered by stock options paid out in the software industry.

When adjusted for inflation, median household income grew 2% from 2000-2004, however the proportion of households earning under 50% and more than 150% of median household income grew while the proportion of households earning between 50% and 149% of the median shrank.

With uneven growth in incomes, many households continue to struggle to make ends meet. While the poverty rate in King County is significantly lower than the national rate, it has grown at a faster rate, increasing to 10.4% in 2004 from 8.4% in 2000.

Transportation. Following the national trend, commute times in King County increased over the last two decades, though the average commute time in King County has remained under 30 minutes. Several factors have contributed to increasing commute times in King County. Commercial traffic has grown over the last decade, employment has rebounded since the recession from 2001 to 2003 and a large proportion of workers continue to commute alone.

In 1994, trucks accounted for approximately 5.3% of the vehicular traffic on King County highways, increasing to 7.3% of that traffic in 2004. Part of this increase may be due to increased trade activity. Since 1996, the Port of Seattle has seen a 42% increase in container volume moving through the seaport. In addition to rail transport, truck traffic will continue to grow in order to accommodate trade activity at the port.

Economic recovery has also brought growth in King County's workforce. Following a net job loss from 2000 to 2003, employment is again increasing and more workers are commuting on our highways. In 2004, 70% of King County residents drove alone to work. This is down slightly from 71% in 1990, but higher than the 64% who commuted alone in 1980. The percentage of residents using carpools decreased from 17% in 1980 to 10% in 2004.

King County Metro Transit, Community Transit and Sound Transit reported almost 109 million passenger boardings in 2005, including 95 million riders on scheduled Metro Transit routes. While Metro has consistently accounted for the majority of passenger boardings in King County, the proportion of passengers on non-Metro managed transit services grew from 5% in 2000 to 7% in 2005. According to these providers, transit ridership dipped with the recession but has now surpassed year-2000 levels.

Environment. King County residents maintain a notable record of residential recycling, reducing water consumption, conserving energy in our residences and workplaces and preserving the quality of our rural streams, lakes and habitat. In addition, noise at our airports has been reduced, largely due to federal regulation, and we are conserving and regenerating our forests, reducing flooding and improving stormwater runoff.

However, there continue to be areas of particular concern for King County. Despite a slight decline after 2000, King County's total energy consumption increased about 10% from 1990 to 2004. Since 1996, per capita consumption of non-petroleum energy (electricity and natural gas) has declined seven percent while per capita use of petroleum energy has risen almost seven percent.

Vehicles in King County traveled 16.2 billion miles in 2003, nearly 20% higher than in 1990 even though per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has remained relatively stable over that time period. VMT measures all vehicles on the streets and highways of King County in a given year. The increase in VMT since 1990 reflects an increased rate of commercial traffic on King County's highways, as well as the growth in population.

Finally, efforts are being made to decrease the amount of waste produced in King County through recycling, food waste collection programs and commercial paper waste reduction programs. The notable countywide recycling rate of 49.3% was considerably higher than the national average rate of 30% for residential recycling in 2004.

Affordable Housing. King County had considerable success in creating and preserving affordable units in 2003. With nearly \$20 million in local funding, over 1,750 units were created or preserved for long-term affordability. This was up from \$17.8 million in 2002 local funding.

However, affordable housing is still lacking for many King County residents. Among all households, 46% of renters and 32% of home owners were paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs in 2002. When households pay more than 30% of their income for housing, resources are often diverted from other essentials such as food, healthcare, clothing, and utilities as well as saving for future needs, such as college tuition and retirement. This is particularly true for those households in the lower income groups.

The King County median home price in 2004 was \$293,000, up 9% from 2003. During the 1997-2004 period, home prices grew at a faster rate than incomes, yet despite this King County's home ownership rate rose above 61% for the first time since 1980. With low interest rates and modest signs of a recovery from recession, more King County households took the opportunity to buy a home, many of them for the first time.

Land Use. The King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) call for development to occur within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to promote efficient use of land. Growth is to be directed first to urban centers, then to areas already urbanized and lastly to areas requiring major infrastructure improvements. Between 1996 and 2002, the percent of residential growth in the rural areas was cut in half, from 8% to 4%. Since 2001, over 95% of residential development has occurred in the UGA.

From 1996 to 2004, King County's urban population has grown 9.4% while 4.5% of the county's urban land was newly-developed. During this time period, plat densities increased throughout the urban area, from an average of 4.6 lots per acre (from 1996 to 2000) to 6.4 lots per acre in 2004. Likewise, densities achieved by new permits in single family zones increased from 3.8 dwelling units (DU) per acre in the 1996-2000 period to 5.3 DU in 2004.

The Urban Center strategy—whose goal is to attract employment and housing in the county's urban centers—is an important element of the Countywide Planning Policies. On the whole, the strategy has been successful but growth has not been evenly distributed among the centers. Between 1995 and 2004, over half of all Urban Center housing growth occurred in just two of the Centers: the downtown areas of Seattle and Bellevue. Over a quarter of the remaining housing growth over the time period occurred in three Seattle area Urban Centers: U-District, 1st Hill/Capitol Hill, and Uptown/Seattle Center.

As employment centers, the urban centers were particularly susceptible to the recession, losing 11% of their jobs from 2000 to 2003. However, from 1995 to 2002, 24% of all jobs created in King County were in urban centers. Another 15% were in Manufacturing/ Industrial Centers. Together these centers accommodated almost 40% of job growth during that time period.

The executive summary provided in this chapter highlights only a selection of the trends reported since last fall. The Affordable Housing Indicator is drawn from its 2004 published report; an updated report for this indicator will be published in Fall 2006. The Environment and Land Use Indicators are drawn from their 2005 reports. Economic and Transportation Indicators are drawn from their reports published in 2006.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME: INCREASE EDUCATIONAL SKILL LEVELS

- The educational background of King County's adult population continues to improve, as 43% of King County residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher and 91% have graduated from high school.
- King County's adult population displays a higher educational background than both Washington State (89% HS, 31% BA) and the country as a whole (84% HS, 27% BA).
- Men and women in King County are equally likely to have earned a high school diploma, however 46% of the male population over 25 has earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, while 41% of the female population over 25 has done so.

Educational Background of Adult Population in King County					
Percent of population over 25 with:	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004*
High School Diploma or Higher	69%	83%	88%	90%	91%
Some college (no Bachelor's degree)	16%	23%	32%	31%	30%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	17%	26%	33%	40%	43%
*Based on American Communities Survey 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau); other years are decennial census					

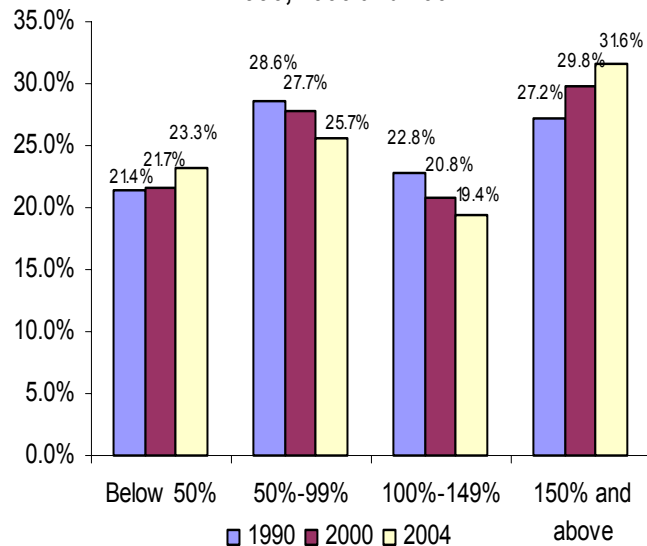
2004 Cohort Graduation & Dropout Rates by Ethnicity: Washington State and King County				
	WA State	King County		
Ethnic Group	On-Time Grad. Rate	Percent Remaining in Cohort at the end of 12th Grade	On-Time Grad. Rate	Annual Drop Out Rate
American Indian	48.1%	71.3%	53.5%	8.2%
Asian	78.3%	91.6%	83.1%	2.4%
Black	55.5%	81.1%	67.1%	6.2%
Hispanic	54.5%	77.5%	63.8%	6.5%
White	74.0%	83.8%	76.8%	4.3%

- The rate of on-time graduation in King County increased from 66.5% in 2003 to 75.0% in 2004. The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction attributes this improvement to better record keeping and data analysis by the state, as well as increased efforts by educators.
- In 2004, 71.4% of males graduated on time, while almost 79% of the females achieved the same distinction. The graduation rate in King County exceeded the rate for Washington State as a whole (70.6%).
- There is continuing disparity in the graduation and dropout rates among different ethnic groups. However, there has been improvement in the on-time graduation rate for all groups, notably among Black and Hispanic students whose graduation rates increased 24.4% and 21.9% respectively.

OUTCOME: INCREASE INCOME AND REDUCE POVERTY

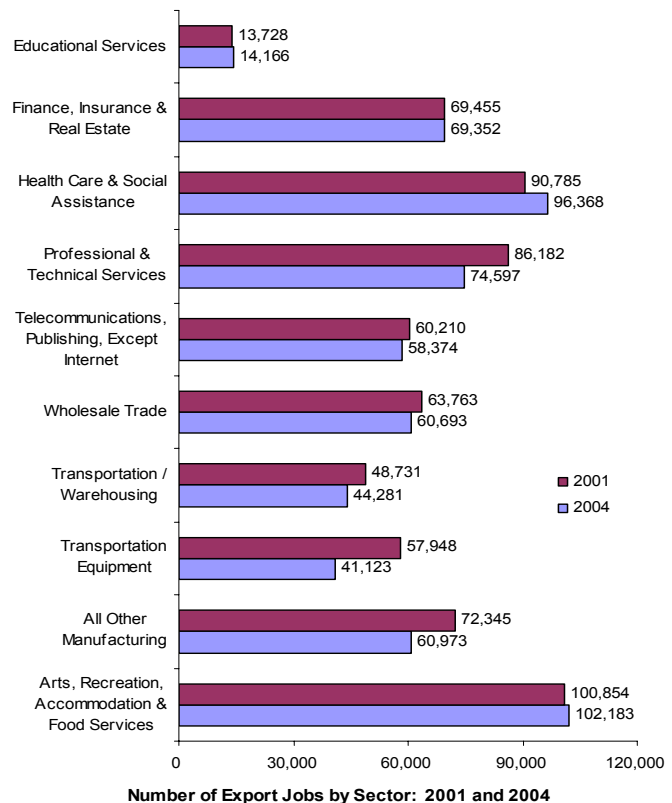
- Although the total number of households in King County increased nearly 20% from 1990 to 2004, most of this growth occurred in the highest and lowest income categories. From 1990 to 2004, the number of households earning above 150% of median income increased nearly 40% while the number of households earning less than half of median income increased nearly 30%. In 2004, nearly a third of all households in King County earned above 150% of median household income.
- In contrast, the number of households in the middle income categories (50% - 149% of median income) has grown only slightly. Consequently, the proportion of households in the middle income categories has dropped, decreasing from 51% in 1990 to about 45% of the total households in 2004.

**King County Household Income Distribution:
1990, 2000 and 2004**



OUTCOME: INCREASE JOBS THAT ADD TO KING COUNTY'S ECONOMIC BASE

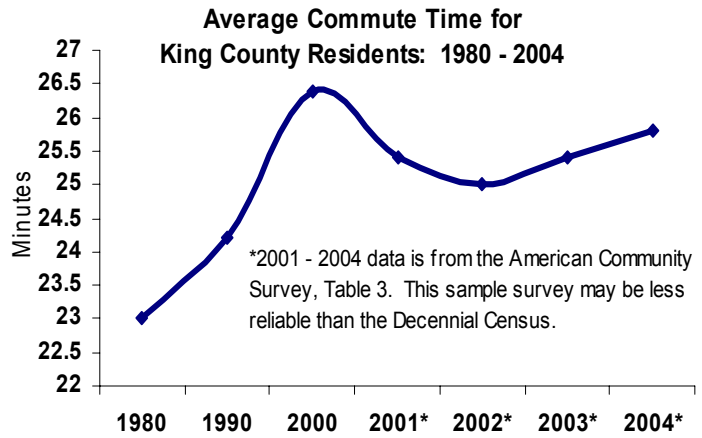
- The “export” or “basic” sector of King County’s economy has diversified since 1980 when the manufacturing sector accounted for over 40% of all export jobs. At that time, transportation equipment manufacturing, including aerospace, represented 23% of the jobs in the export sector. Today, manufacturing provides less than 17% of all jobs that export goods outside of the region.
- Overall, King County experienced a 6% loss of export jobs between 2001 and 2004. Export jobs currently make up about 57% of total jobs in King County.
- Between 2001 and 2004, the largest gains in the export sector have occurred in health care and social assistance. Conversely, transportation equipment manufacturing experienced the greatest decrease in jobs, losing nearly 30% since 2001. Other manufacturing jobs and professional/technical service jobs also experienced losses.



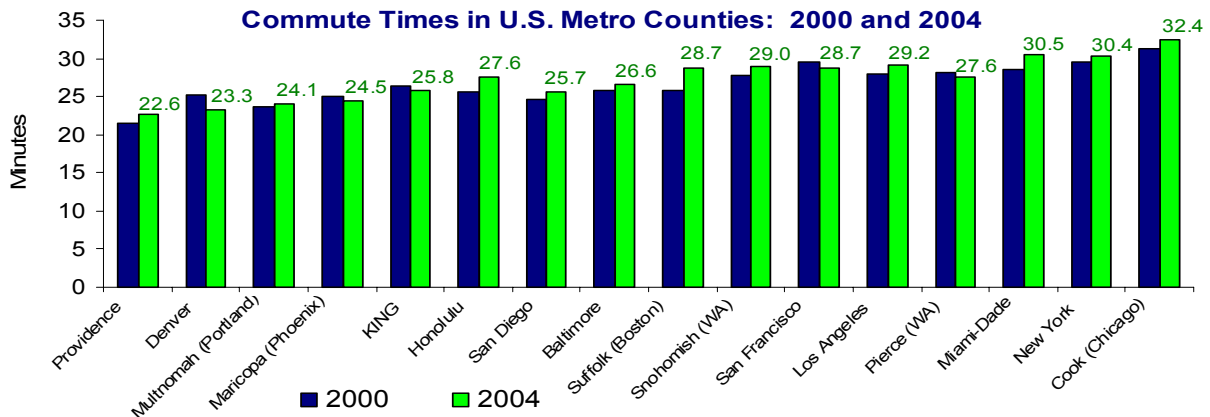
TRANSPORTATION

OUTCOME: ENCOURAGE LINKAGES BETWEEN RESIDENCES, COMMERCIAL CENTERS AND WORKPLACE LOCATIONS

- From 1990 to 2000 average commute times for King County residents rose from 24.2 minutes to 26.5 minutes, an increase of about 9.5%. After dipping in 2001 and 2002, commute times began to climb once again.
- According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) the average King County resident commuted 25.8 minutes one-way in 2004, up slightly from the 25.4 minutes reported in 2003. This trip time includes all forms of commuting. The national average commute time in 2004 was 24.7 minutes.

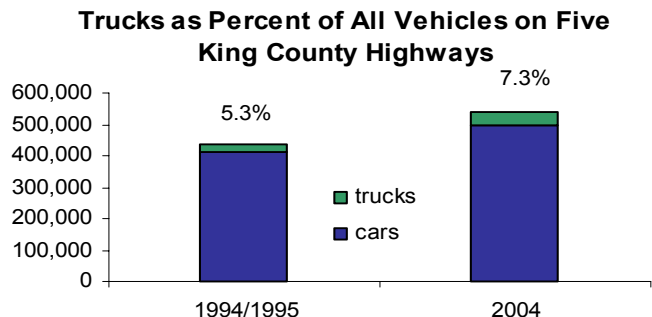


- Of the 236 counties surveyed by ACS, King County had the 89th longest commute time in 2004. King County's commute time is relatively low among major metropolitan counties.



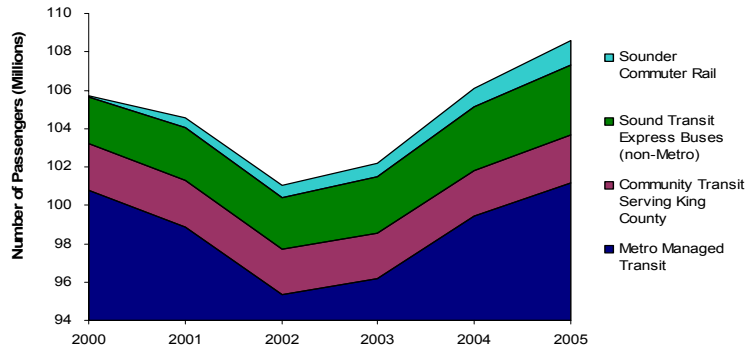
OUTCOME: IMPROVE ABILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO MOVE EFFICIENTLY AND COST-EFFECTIVELY THROUGH THE REGION

- Truck traffic has been increasing faster than car traffic on major King County highways, attributed to increased trade activity. Truck traffic now accounts for 7.3% of all vehicles on the five King County highways sampled. Since 1996, the Port of Seattle has seen a 42% increase in container volume moving through the seaport.



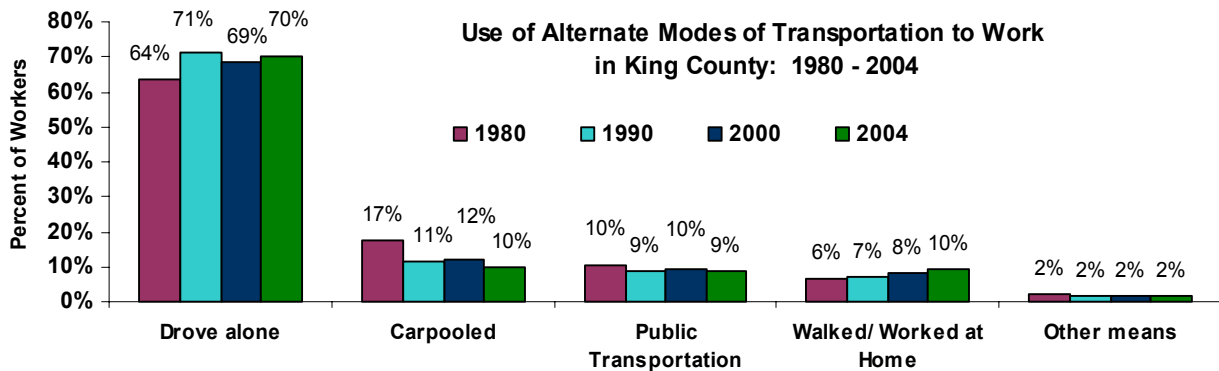
OUTCOME: INCREASE THE USE OF MODES OF TRANSPORTATION OTHER THAN SINGLE OCCUPANCY VEHICLES

**Total Annual Passenger Boardings on Metro Transit,
Community Transit, and Sound Transit: 2000-2005**

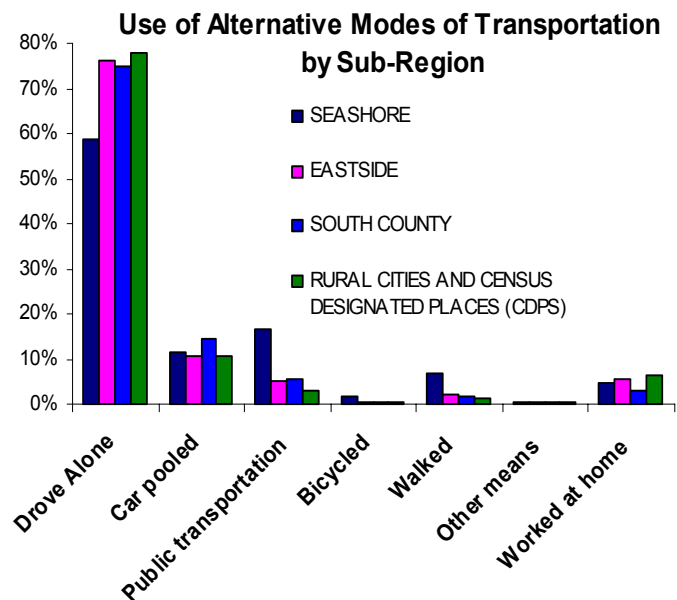


- Public transit usage has been increasing since 2002, with almost 109 million passenger boardings in 2005. Bus ridership had decreased as employment in King County remained relatively low in 2001 and 2002. Recent job growth following the recession has led to more riders on Metro Transit. Both Sound Transit and Sounder Commuter Rail saw rapid growth from 2000 to 2005.

- Despite the increase in total annual passenger boardings of public transportation, only 9% of King County residents use public transportation for their commute, down slightly from 10% in 2000. In 2004, 70% of King County residents drove alone to work, compared with just 64% in 1980. Carpooling decreased dramatically between 1980 and 1990, but has remained relatively stable since 1990.



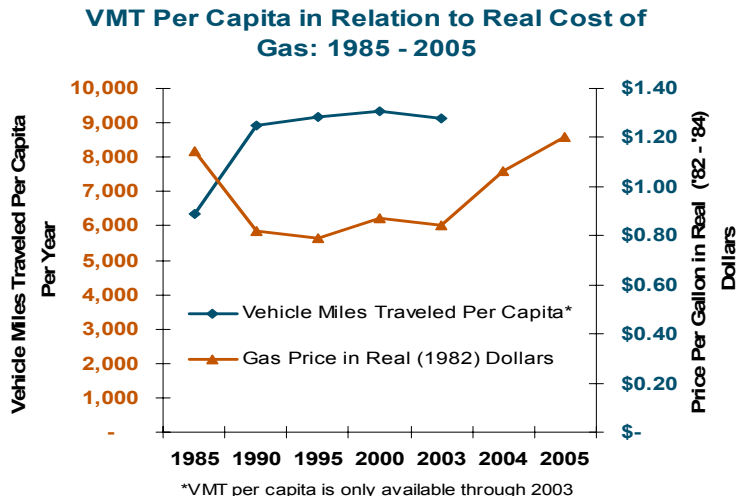
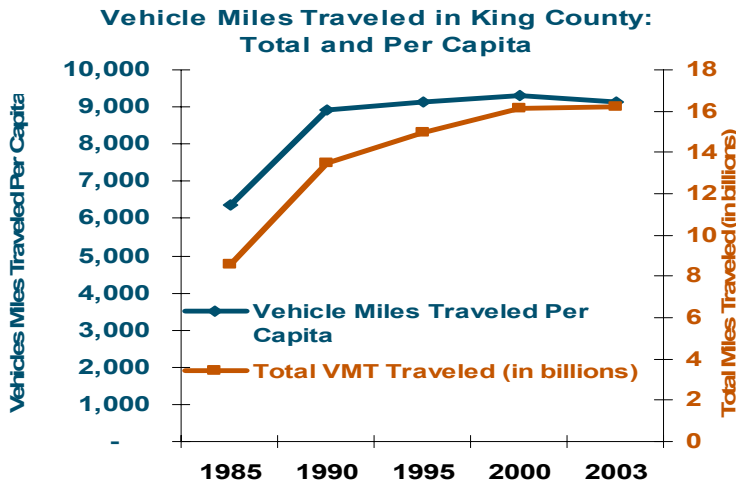
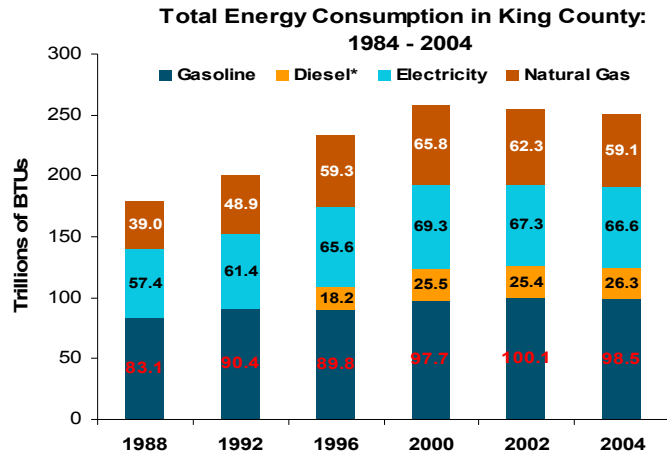
- The proportion of people who work at home or walk to work has increased steadily from 6% in 1980 to 10% in 2004. This trend may be due to changes in information and communication technologies, which have allowed more people to work flexible hours or work from home.
- In the densely-populated SeaShore sub-area (Seattle, Shoreline and Lake Forest Park), commuters are much more likely to use alternatives to SOVs. According to the 2000 census, while 58.5% still drove alone, nearly 17% used public transportation, 11.5% used carpools, 7% walked and almost 2% bicycled. Another 4.5% worked at home.



ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME: IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

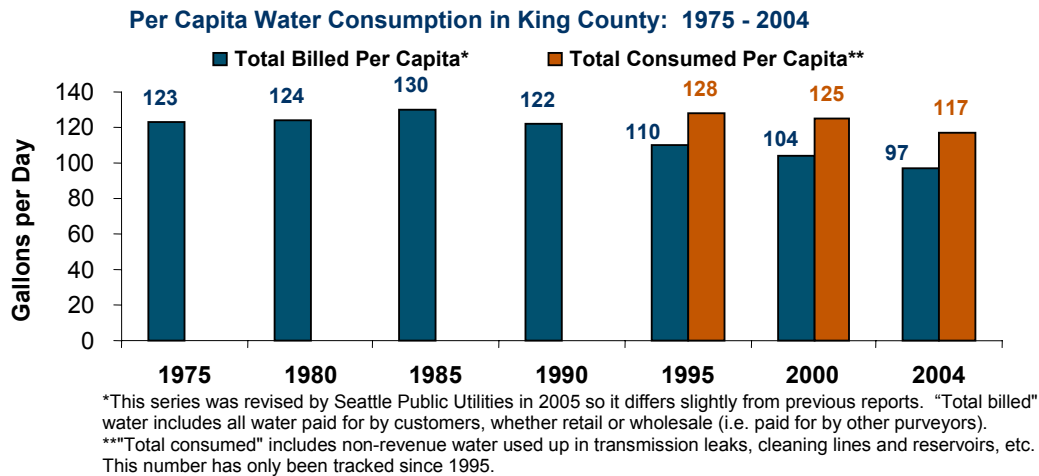
- Despite a slight decline from 2000 to 2004, King County's total energy consumption increased about 10% from 1990 to 2004, (not including diesel consumption for which data was not collected until 1996).
- After peaking between 1999 and 2002, per capita energy consumption is now at about the same level as it was in the mid 1990s. Per capita consumption of non-petroleum energy (electricity and natural gas) has declined 7% since 1996. On the other hand, per capita use of petroleum energy has risen almost 7% since 1996.



- The average King County resident traveled 9,124 miles on county streets and highways in 2003, in either commercial or private vehicles. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita appears to be holding relatively steady since 1990, though a recent slight decline may be attributed to the rising cost of gasoline.
- Vehicles in King County traveled 16.2 billion miles in 2003, and total VMT continues to rise slightly as population increases, despite the fact that per capita VMT has stabilized or declined.
- The rise in the real cost of gasoline, after more than a decade of stable gas prices (in real dollars), may continue to lower the per capita VMT or encourage a return to more fuel-efficient vehicles.

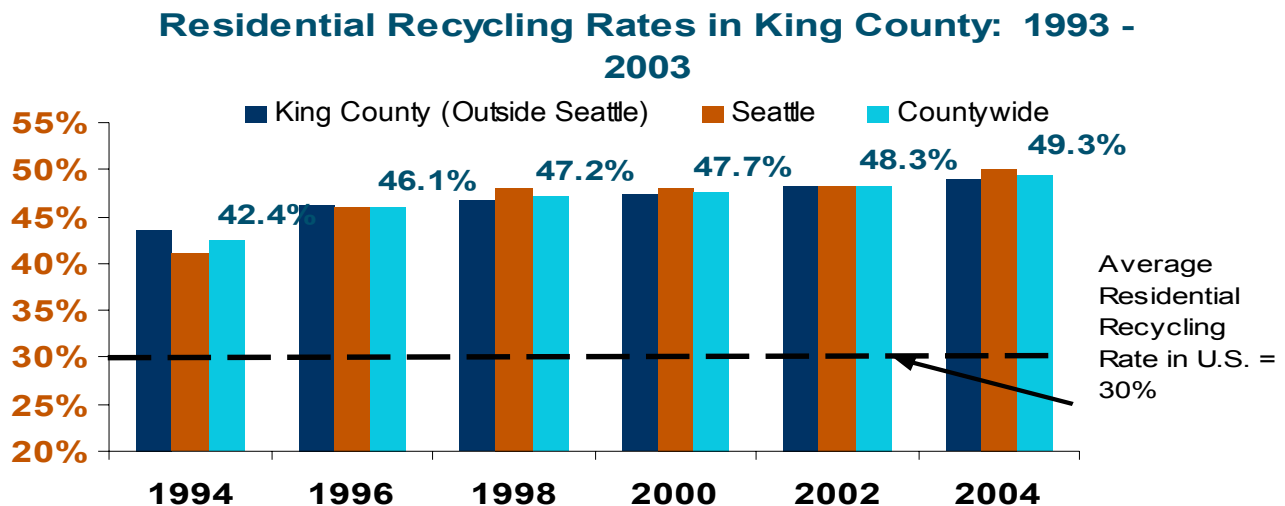
OUTCOME: PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

- Total water consumed per person in 2004 has decreased since 1995 for King County residents served by Seattle Public Utilities, which serves about 73% of the county's population.
- With minor variations, per capita billed water consumption has shown a downward trend since 1985. Per capita billed consumption is now 25% lower than its peak in 1985. Over the long term, total water consumption will increase with population and employment growth.



OUTCOME: DECREASE WASTE DISPOSAL AND INCREASE RECYCLING

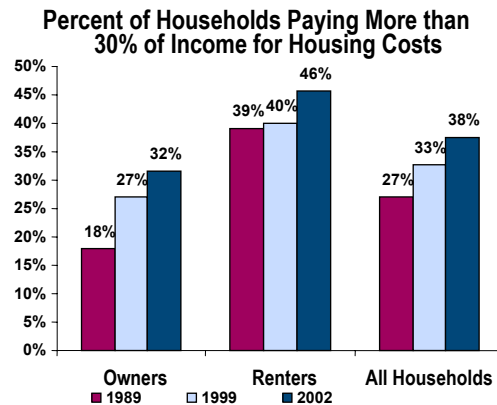
- The residential recycling rate is improving steadily throughout the county. The recycling rate for King County is nearly 50%. This rate compares favorably with the average residential recycling rate nationwide, which stands at around 30%.



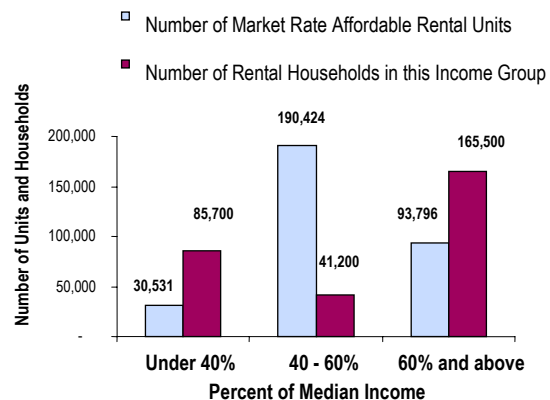
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

OUTCOME: PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL KING COUNTY RESIDENTS

- Since 1989, the share of both renter and owner households that pay more than 30% of household income for housing costs has increased from 27% to 38% since 1989.
- In 2002, 46% of renter households paid over 30% of their income for housing compared with 40% just three years previous. Likewise, 32% of home owners paid more than 30% of their income for housing in 2002, up from 27% in 1999.
- With a vacancy rate of over 7% in 2004, King County's 315,000 rental units provide a sufficient amount of housing for its 292,000 rental households. However, the supply of rental housing is not necessarily affordable to all renters. There is no affordable rental housing for 99.5% of the households that earn 30% of median income or less. A household in this income group earns no more than \$18,100 and can afford \$450 at most per month for rent.
- About 40% of King County's rental households earn above 80% of median income. Almost 100,000 of these households must occupy rental units that would be affordable to lower income levels.



Supply and Demand for Rental Units in King County: 2003



Supply and Demand for Affordable Rental Housing: 2004					
Percent of Median HH Income	Upper Income Break	Affordable Rental Range in 2004	Number of Market Rate Affordable Rental Units (Vacant as well as occupied)	Number of Rental Households in this Income Group	Cumulative Deficit or Surplus of Supply to Demand
Under 30%	\$ 18,100	Under \$450	315	65,000	(64,685)
30 - 40%	\$ 24,160	\$450 - \$600	30,216	20,700	(55,169)
40 - 50%	\$ 30,200	\$600 - \$750	107,959	20,500	32,290
50 - 60%	\$ 36,240	\$750 - \$900	82,465	20,700	94,055
60% - 80%	\$ 48,300	\$900 - \$1200	74,911	39,400	129,565
80% and above		Over \$1200	18,885	126,100	22,350
Median Household Income = \$60,400			314,750	292,400	22,350

LAND USE

OUTCOME: LIMIT GROWTH IN RURAL/RESOURCE AREAS; ENCOURAGE A GREATER SHARE OF GROWTH IN URBAN AREAS AND URBAN CENTERS

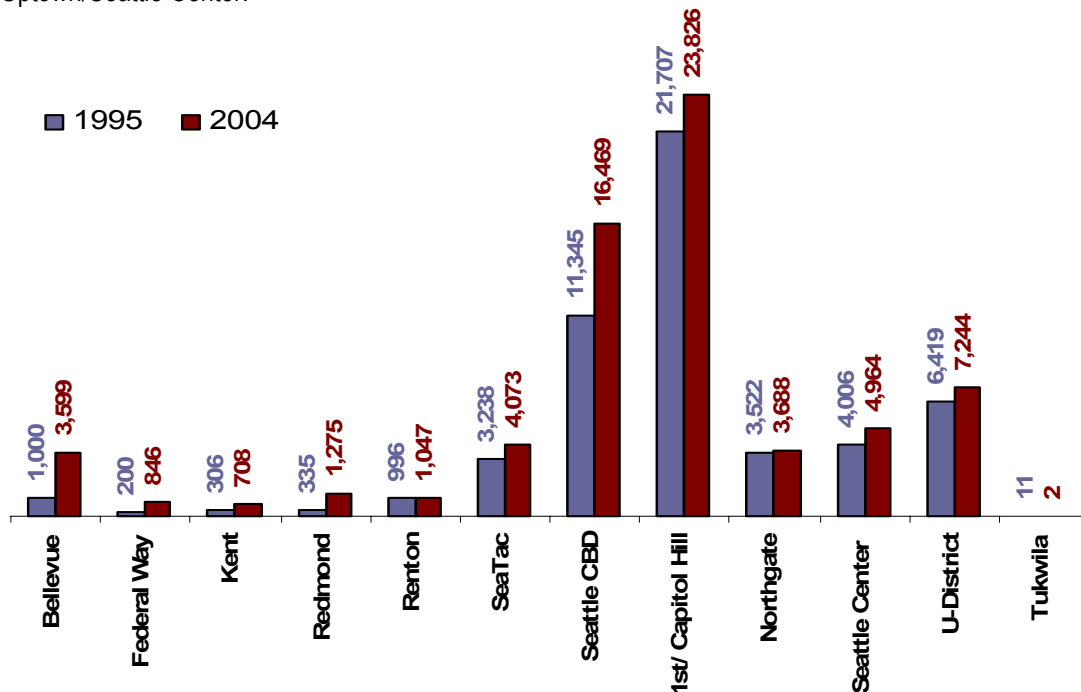
- In 2004, King County had about 785,000 housing units, with 93% of those existing in urban areas. Despite covering just 3% of the Urban Growth Area, about 9% of the county's total housing exists in designated Urban Centers.
- From 1995 to 2004, the number of housing units in King County increased 12%, up from nearly 700,000 units. Housing growth in Urban Centers outpaced the countywide rate of growth, adding almost 20,000 units for a 28% increase. In that time period, Urban Centers collectively accommodated 17% of the housing growth in King County from 1995-2004. This does not include housing growth in the Urban Centers that were designated after 1995.

King County Urban Center Housing Growth, 1995 - 2004

	# units 1995	# units 2004	# change '95 - '04	% change '95 - '04
Auburn*	No data	1,087	N/A	N/A
Bellevue	1,000	3,599	2,599	260%
Burien*	No data	1,077	N/A	N/A
Federal Way	200	846	646	323%
First Hill/Capitol Hill (Seattle)	21,707	23,826	2,119	10%
Kent	306	708	402	131%
Northgate (Seattle)	3,522	3,688	166	5%
Redmond	335	1,275	940	281%
Renton	996	1,047	51	5%
SeaTac	3,238	4,073	835	26%
Seattle Downtown	11,345	16,469	5,124	45%
Totem Lake (Kirkland)*	No data	2,944	N/A	N/A
Tukwila	11	2	(9)	-82%
U-District (Seattle)	6,419	7,244	825	13%
Uptown/Seattle Center	4,006	4,964	958	24%
Total	53,085	72,849		

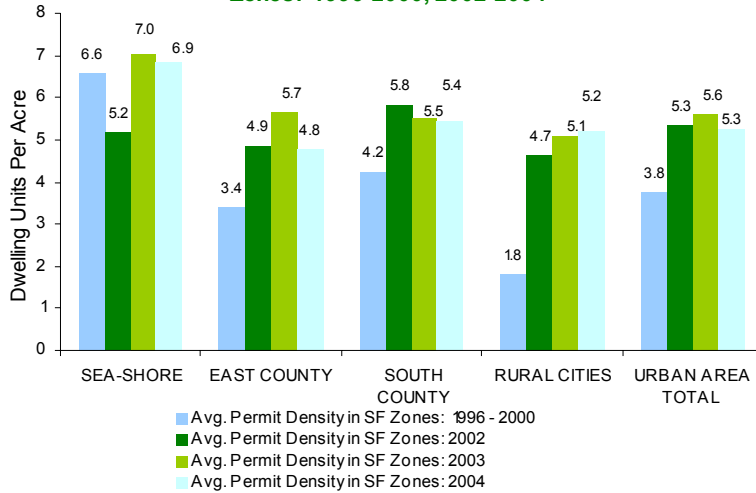
*Auburn, Burien and Totem Lake received their Urban Center status after 1995

- Housing growth has not occurred uniformly within King County's Urban Centers, though nearly every Center has seen an increase in housing since 1995. Between 1995 and 2004, over half of all Urban Center housing growth occurred in just two of the Centers: the downtown areas of Seattle and Bellevue. Over a quarter of the remaining housing growth over the time period occurred in three Seattle area Urban Centers: U-District, 1st Hill/Capitol Hill, and Uptown/Seattle Center.



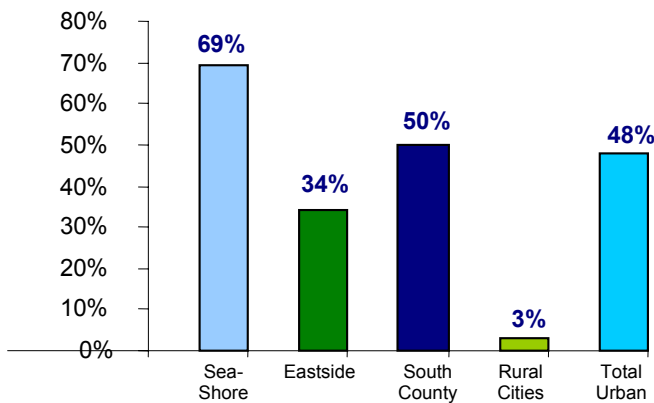
OUTCOME: MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF URBAN LAND

**Change in Achieved Densities for Permits in Single Family
Zones: 1996-2000, 2002-2004**



- For the urban areas in King County, net densities achieved by new permits in single family zones have increased from 3.8 dwelling units (DU) per acre in the 1996-2000 period to 5.3 DU in 2004.
- Over this time period, permit density increased most markedly in urban areas outside the already-dense SeaShore region. East County increased from 3.4 DU to 4.8 DU per acre in 2004; South County from 4.2 DU to 5.4 DU per acre; and Rural Cities from 1.8 DU to 5.2 DU per acre.

**Percent of New Residential Units Built Through
Redevelopment in 2004 by Sub-Region**



- In 2004, about 46% of new residential units in all King County were permitted on land that had a pre-existing use. In the urban area, the proportion of redevelopment was about 48%. Not surprisingly, redevelopment occurs at a higher rate in the SeaShore region that is already densely developed, while rural cities have a relatively low redevelopment rate.

- During the nine years from 1996 through 2004, King County's urban population has grown 9.4%, averaging about 1% per year. Growth was rapid from 1999-2001 but then slowed through 2003. In 2004, urban population grew to about 1,651,300, an increase of 9,000.
- In this same period, about 4.5% of urban land was newly-developed. This amounts to about 0.5% per year. Not surprisingly, urban land consumption also occurred at the greatest rate from 1999-2001.

**Residential Land Development and Population
Growth in Urban King County: 1996 - 2004**

